

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, July 27, 2012

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. Rhode Island Race to the Top – [Early Learning Challenge](#) Scope of Work receives approval
2. LEAs reminded to distribute 2012 School, District [Report Cards](#)

From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE):

3. Reminder: LEAs asked to select District [SSO Administrators](#), provide contact information to RIDE – **Action Item**
4. RIDE asks LEAs to update [Personnel Assignment Process](#) files by August 17 – **Action Item**
5. RIDE to share [Summer Academy registration](#) and attendance data with superintendents
6. RIDE to share final [evaluation ratings](#) reflection questions
7. [Craig v East Providence](#) School Committee decision posted

From the U.S. Department of Education:

8. Education Secretary Duncan warns about [sequestration of funds](#)
9. Department announces [STEM Master Teacher Corps](#)

Action Item Calendar

Today (July 27): Deadline for reporting [final evaluation ratings](#)

Monday (July 30): Submission, [Absence, ADA, ADM, Suspension, Truancy](#) reports due

August 3: Deadline for naming [EPSS District Configuration Administrators](#)

August 3: Deadline to provide contact information for District SSO Administrators (see below)

August 17: Personnel Assignment Process file update due (see below)

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. Rhode Island Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Scope of Work receives approval

Last week, the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services approved the Rhode Island Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Scope of Work. In December, Rhode Island was one of nine states to receive a through the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant to improve early learning and development opportunities for our youngest learners. The Scope of Work approved last week is a project plan that outlines the timelines, work, and outcomes of the seven overarching projects underway through this \$50-million dollar grant. The seven projects are:

- Overall Grant Management;
- Improving the Quality of Early Learning Programs;
- Establishing and Measuring Tiered Quality Program Standards for Early Learning Programs;
- Using Early Learning and Development Standards;
- Developing and Supporting Effective Early Childhood Assessment;
- Building an Early Learning Data System; and
- Improving the Knowledge and Competencies of the Early Learning Workforce.

The official approval of the Scope of Work allows us to continue to move forward in our commitment to improving outcomes for all young children.

For more information, see:

<http://www.earlylearningri.org/early-learning-challenge>

2. LEAs reminded to distribute 2012 School, District Report Cards

As the school year approaches and many of your schools are scheduling School Report Nights and other public events, I want to remind you that school and district report cards should be distributed to the families in your school and district community.

All school and district report cards are posted on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/ride/reportCards.aspx>

Each 2012 report card includes a link to complete NECAP test results. Each report card also includes an accountability summary, containing information about the 2012 Classifications we released earlier this month. We soon will also post a “quick guide” (in English and Spanish) to help families read the report cards.

Please note that the No Child Left Behind Act requires you to “publicly disseminate” the district and school report cards to all schools in your district and “to all parents of students attending these schools” (Sec. 1111 (h)(2)(E)). This dissemination will of course require coordination between your office and your principals.

There are many ways by which you can send these report cards to parents and families, including direct mail or as an enclosure with other mailings from the district. The schools may

distribute these district and school report cards along with individual student report cards, as well.

Guidance from the U.S. Department of Education says that “LEAs may use their regular method of communicating with parents to meet the dissemination requirement so long as it provides information to all parents.”

In the past, some of you have asked whether it’s sufficient to post report cards on a website. The answer is no. Guidance from the U.S. Department of Education also says that “posting report cards on the Internet alone is not a sufficient means for disseminating” the cards.

You may, however, meet the requirements of the law if you and the school principals:

- notify all parents, through your regular method of communicating, that all report cards are posted online and are available at the school and district offices;
- include in this notification a response form allowing the parents to request that a copy of the cards be mailed to them; and
- mail copies of the report cards to all parents who request copies.

I encourage you and your principals to write cover letters to accompany these report cards. The cover letters can help parents understand the data and other information contained in the report cards, and the letters can be an opportunity to explain steps each school is taking to meet the state’s performance goals.

I also encourage you to work with your principals to use these report cards during your School Report Nights, which can be an excellent opportunity to discuss the school report cards, to highlight some of the key information, and to respond to inquiries and suggestions from families and from the school community.

Please let me know if there is anything we at RIDE can do to help you with this process.

From RIDE:

3. Reminder: LEAs asked to select District SSO Administrators, provide contact information to RIDE – *Action Item*

Please see this notice from our Office of Network and Information Systems:

RIDE is developing a Single Sign-On system (SSO). This new SSO system will provide each educator in Rhode Island with one user ID and password. This SSO ID will give educators access to RIDE data systems, such as the new Instructional Management System and the Educator Performance and Support System, from one single portal. RIDE is requesting that you identify someone within your LEA to serve as the District SSO Administrator. This person will be responsible for managing users in your LEA with tasks such as assigning access to applications and removing access from applications. In most districts, your data manager or IT director has assumed this role for our current eRIDE portal and would be a great fit for the District SSO Administrator role. Please submit your LEA name and the name and e-mail address of the person in your district who will serve as

the District SSO Administrator to helpdesk@ride.ri.gov by Friday, **August 3**. RIDE will offer webinar training sessions to the District SSO Administrators early next month.

If you have any questions, please contact the HelpDesk, at helpdesk@ride.ri.gov or 222-8400.

4. RIDE asks LEAs to update Personnel Assignment Process files by August 17 – Action Item

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

To support the implementation of the EPSS system, the Office of Educator Quality and Certification requests that you update your Personnel Assignment Process (PAP) for the coming school year during the next three weeks. This will allow us to determine educators' assignments for the coming school year and provide them with access to the new portal for the EPSS that will be launched next month. We will open the PAP to all LEAs by August 6, and we ask that you update your reports by **August 17**. After August 17, you may continue to access the PAP to add or adjust assignments as needed. Our Office of Educator Quality and Certification has also shared this request with all HR directors through the HR listserve.

Thank you for your help in implementing this new support system for all educators.

5. RIDE to share Summer Academy registration and attendance data with superintendents

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

RIDE will be sending you the registration and attendance data for your list of designated evaluators at the mid-way point and after the completion of the Summer Academies.

Our goal is to help LEAs ensure that all of their designated evaluators receive the support they need and to complete the appropriate Summer Academy training prior to the start of the coming school year.

6. RIDE to share final evaluation ratings reflection questions

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Thank you to everyone who submitted their aggregate final evaluation ratings to RIDE. The data will inform the training and support we provide to the field as we continue to learn from your experiences during gradual implementation. To help LEAs interpret their final evaluation ratings for the 2010-11 school year, RIDE will be sharing additional guidance, including a series of questions designed to help district leaders analyze and reflect on their results.

7. Craig v East Providence School Committee decision posted

Our Legal Office has posted this decision in the matter of John O. Craig v East Providence School Committee:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2012/012-12_John_Craig_v._E._Providence_S._C._072512.pdf

From the U.S. Department of Education:

8. Education Secretary Duncan warns about sequestration of funds

Please see this notice from the Office of Communications and Outreach regarding sequestration of funds.

On Wednesday, Secretary Duncan testified before a Senate Appropriations Subcommittee about the impact of looming automatic budget cuts. Sequestration would mandate across-the-board cuts to the federal budget that would go into effect in January 2013, if Congress does not act. While a lot of attention has been given to impending cuts to defense, the Secretary emphasized the substantial impact the cuts would have on all government programs and services. "Sequestration is absolutely the wrong way to make policy," he said. "Essentially, we're playing chicken with the lives of the American people - our schools, communities, small businesses, farms, public safety, infrastructure, and national security.... Clearly, it is time for Congress to work together with the Administration to create a long-term plan to reduce the deficit while simultaneously supporting the economic recovery that is underway."

While most schools will not feel the impact of across-the-board cuts until fall 2013 (see Deputy Secretary Tony Miller's July 20 memorandum on sequestration at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/secletter/120720.html>), the reduction in federal funding would be felt throughout the nation. For example:

Title I funding would be cut by \$1.1 billion, cutting off funding to an estimated 4,000 schools serving 1.8 million disadvantaged students. The jobs of more than 15,000 teachers and aides would be at risk.

Funding for special education would be reduced by \$900 million. That could translate into the layoffs of more than 10,000 teachers, aides, and other staff members who provide instruction and other support to 6.6 million children with disabilities.

Up to 100,000 low-income children would be denied access to the Head Start program, which is critical to preparing them for success in kindergarten and beyond.

For more information, see:

<http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/testimony-secretary-duncan-senate-labor-health-and-human-services-and-education-approp>.

As Secretary Duncan notes above, sequestration should not affect funds for the coming school year. We are monitoring this situation closely, however, and will notify you of any potential affect on programs in Rhode Island public schools.

9. Department announces STEM Master Teacher Corps

Please see the message from the Office of Communications and Outreach:

Last week, in a roundtable with a group of K-12 math and science teachers at the White House, Secretary Duncan and members of the Administration announced the President's plan for the creation of a new, nationwide Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Master Teacher Corps, comprised of some of the nation's finest educators in STEM subjects. The Corps will kick off with 50 exceptional STEM teachers in 50 sites and be expanded over four years to reach 10,000 teachers. These selected teachers will make a multi-year commitment to the Corps and, in exchange for their expertise, leadership, and service, will receive an annual stipend of up to \$20,000 on top of their base salary. The Administration intends to launch the Corps with \$1 billion from the President's 2013 budget request currently before Congress. Also, the Administration is immediately dedicating roughly \$100 million from the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) toward helping school districts implement high-quality plans to establish career ladders that identify, develop, and leverage effective STEM teachers. For more information, see:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/07/18/president-obama-announces-new-plan-create-stem-master-teaching-corps>.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>